

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Remarks by President Trump Before Marine One Departure

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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
BEFORE MARINE ONE DEPARTURE

South Lawn

3:38 P.M. EDT

Q Mr. President, why did you throw the towel in on Ratcliffe? Why didn't you want to wait a little bit longer and see how that process went?

THE PRESIDENT: Which process are you talking about?

Q The confirmation process. The confirmation process with Congressman Ratcliffe.

THE PRESIDENT: Because I felt that Congressman Ratcliffe was being treated very unfairly. I was reading the press. And I think I am a student of the press. And I could see that the press was treating him, I thought, very unfairly. He's an outstanding man.

And I asked him -- I said, "Do you want to go through this for two or three months or would you want me to, maybe, do something else?" And he thought about it. I said, "It's going to be rough." I could see exactly where the press was going and fake news. He's a fine man. He's a fine man. And so we hadn't started the process and I thought it's easier before we start.

But I read things that were just unfair. And he's just too

good. He doesn't deserve it.

Q Mr. President, what issue do you have with Sue Gordon in the Acting role?

THE PRESIDENT: A little louder. What?

Q Sue Gordon, as Acting DNI -- what issue do you have with her?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that might be -- I like Sue Gordon. And Sue Gordon is there now, and I like her very much. I've always liked Sue Gordon.

Q Would you name her Acting?

THE PRESIDENT: Could be. Yeah. It could be. We'll make another choice. And Sue will be -- she's there now, and certainly she will be considered for the Acting, and that could happen. We'll probably be talking about it either later today or next week.

Do you like Sue Gordon?

Q Did Ratcliffe get cold feet, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I think he was just treated very badly, very harshly by the press. And he really had a decision to make. "Do you want to go through this for -- it could be months." And I said, "I think I see exactly what they're trying to do." Nobody understands the press, but I think I understand them as well as anybody. And I didn't think it was fair.

Q Did Republican lawmakers reach out to you to express concern about Ratcliffe?

THE PRESIDENT: No, they didn't. I think he would have had support. But again, we were very early in the process. We hadn't even started. So we were very early in the process. And I think he would have had good support, certainly from the Republicans.

Q They were pretty chilly.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

Q They were pretty chilly at first.

THE PRESIDENT: I haven't seen that. I could tell you, the Democrats were chilly. That's for sure.

Q Chairman Burr, Mitch McConnell --

THE PRESIDENT: But the Republican, I think, would have been very good. But a lot of the Republicans didn't know John. But I think he would have had good receptivity, and he was getting that. But I believe he made the right decision.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. U.N. security (inaudible) resolution and the North Koreans' missile launch is in violation of U.N. (inaudible). How did you (inaudible) this?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't -- do you understand?

Q I'm sorry, I did not.

Q U.N. security --

Q Mr. President, what does this say about the White House's vetting? What does it say about the White House's vetting process? This is the second nominee --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, no. You vet for me. I like when you vet. No, no, you vet.

Q This is the second time a head of an agency has had to withdraw.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the White House has a great vetting process. You vet for me. When I give a name, I give it out to the press and you vet for me. A lot of times, you do a very good job -- not always.

Q What does that say about the White House's process of vetting?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that the White -- well, if you look at it, I mean, if you take a look at it, the vetting process for the White House is very good. But you're part of the vetting process, you know? I give out a name to the press, and they vet for me. We save a lot of money that way.

But, in the case of John, I really believe that he was being treated very harshly and very unfairly.

Q President Trump, Republicans did express concern about Ratcliffe's experience. Was that a deciding factor?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I tell you what: I think he would've had very good support. Republicans love John Ratcliffe, and I think he would've had very good support.

Now, he wasn't in that world that much. I think he would've picked it up very quickly. But I think he would've had great Republican support. Probably would've had no Democrat support, which would've been nice to get some. But I think he would've done fine. But it would've been a long -- it would've been a long, hard slog.

Q Another question, if you don't mind, sir. The tweet that you put out about Elijah Cummings and that attempted burglary on his home, Nikki Haley is saying it was so unnecessary. What do you say to Nikki Haley?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that's okay. I don't mind that. The tweet itself was just, really, a repeat of what I heard over the news. I know his house was robbed, and I thought that was too bad. That was really just -- that was really not meant as a wise-guy tweet. I mean, his house was robbed and it came over the news at a certain moment last night. And I had just mentioned it.

Q What does China need to do to avoid those tariffs going into force on September 1st?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think China -- number one, you have to understand, we are so far behind. We have been treated so badly. And I don't blame China; I blame our past leaders, our

past Presidents, our past trade representatives. They've done a terrible job.

China -- we can't just go and make an even deal with China. We have to make a much better deal with China. Because, right now, they have a very unfair playing field, and I'm turning it around. So we're getting 25 percent of \$250 billion, and now we'll be getting 10 percent of probably close to \$350 billion. It's a lot of money.

China has to do a lot of things to turn it around. But you'll be seeing. They've got to do a lot of things. It goes on on September 1st. And, frankly, if they don't do them, I can always increase it very substantially. In other words, I could increase it -- if I wanted to, I could increase it to a very much higher number.

Q On Eric Garner, sir. On Eric Garner -- the judge apparently recommended today the officer involved in that chokehold should be fired. Do you agree with that decision?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, it's in a process right now. I know the case very well. It's a very sad situation. It really -- it's heartbreaking. But that's in a process right now, so I'm not going to get involved in the process.

As you know, they're going to be making a final decision, I guess, over the next 10 days. So I won't interfere with the process.

Q Mr. President, sir, are you withdrawing the troops from Afghanistan? And how many troops are you withdrawing from Afghanistan?

THE PRESIDENT: Say it?

Q How many troops are you withdrawing from Afghanistan?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we've been moving it down. We've been moving it down from Syria. We defeated the ISIS caliphate, and we have now 100 percent of that. We have 2,500 prisoners, and Europe is going to have to take them, or somebody is going to have to

take them. But we have 2,500 ISIS prisoners. And we've told Europe, "Hey, some come from France. Some come from Germany." They're going to have to take them. So we'll see what happens.

But we've pretty much reduced. We've taken it way down in Syria. Ultimately, it'll be down to a very few people, if any.

With respect to Afghanistan, we've made a lot of progress. We're talking, but we've also made a lot of progress. We're reducing it. We've been there for 19 years. We're really serving as policemen. We could win Afghanistan in two days or three days or four days, if we wanted. But I'm not looking to kill 10 million people.

Q Can you trust the Taliban?

THE PRESIDENT: What about it?

Q Mr. President, can you trust the Taliban in these negotiations?

THE PRESIDENT: We could win that war very easily. I could win that war in a week, if I wanted to. But I'm not looking to kill 10 million people, okay? Many of them would be innocent people. I'm not looking to do. And I'm not talking nuclear, by the way; I'm talking totally conventional. But I'm not looking to kill millions of people in Afghanistan.

Q But on the trust factor, can you actually come to an agreement with them?

THE PRESIDENT: That I can't tell you. I mean, you know, we'll find out.

Q Mr. President, Republican Congressman Will Hurd announced he's not running for reelection -- the eighth Republican to say that. (Inaudible) critical of you and your tweets about the Squad. What's your reaction to him not going to run again?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hear he's done a good job. I don't know Congressman Hurd, but I've heard he's done a good job. We

differ on certain subjects, but I've heard he's actually done a good job. It's too bad he's leaving. But I really don't know him.

Q Mr. President, who's on your shortlist to replace Coats?

THE PRESIDENT: So I do have a shortlist. I have a list of a few people we're looking at -- very well-known people. People where the vetting would go very easily because that's what they've been doing; they're in the intelligence world.

So we do. I have a list of three people that I'm going to be working on over the weekend. We're going to Bedminster. I'll be working on that over the weekend. And probably, on Monday, I'll give you an answer.

And I do like Sue Gordon very much as Acting, as your -- as per your question.

Q Who are the other two Mr. President?

Q Who would you like us to vet?

THE PRESIDENT: Say it again.

Q Who would you like us to vet? You said you relied on us to vet.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we really -- I think we have a lot of good people. We have three people, specifically -- I mean, I could tell you.

Q Yes, tell us the names.

THE PRESIDENT: They're -- I could tell you. They're right here. (The President gestures to his jacket pocket.)

Q Who are they?

THE PRESIDENT: Right there. But it's too -- it's too early. Do you want a piece of the list?

Go ahead.

Q As far as peace negotiations with the Taliban, can the Taliban be trusted? Do you trust the Taliban?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't want to say if they can be trusted or not. Look, history, I would say, is not so good, but they don't like us much either. But we've brought them down; we've brought the number of soldiers down very substantially. They're coming down. We are talking to them. We have a lot of advantages making a deal with us.

We're doing very well, as you know, with Pakistan. I met a gentleman who I liked a lot -- as you know -- last week, from Pakistan. I have a lot of respect for him. We have a good friendship -- a good feeling, good chemistry. And I think Pakistan will help us, and I think others will get involved.

But we've been there 19 years. We're not really -- let's put it this way: We're more police than anything else, and that's not for our soldiers.

And I've said -- I've said it a lot: We could win the war in Pak -- we could win the war, if you look at it -- and you can look at it any way you want -- we can win the war in Afghanistan in less than a week. But I'm not looking to kill 10 million people. And I'm not talking nuclear. I'm not talking nuclear. But we'd win that war in less than a week, and I have that as an option, always. But that's what we're not looking to do.

Q Mr. President, how do you avoid a nuclear arms race now that you've decided to withdraw from the INF nuclear treaty?

THE PRESIDENT: So, Russia -- we have been speaking to Russia about that -- about a pact for nuclear -- so that they get rid of some, we get rid of some. We'd probably have to put China in there.

But right now, we're number one, Russia is number two, and China is number three. But China is quite a bit down, in terms of nuclear. China is much lower. But we would certainly want to include China at some point.

But I would think that the relationship is good. We're trying to have a good relationship. It's very hard, in light of the phony witch hunt, which is now dead.

But I will say this: With Russia, if we could get a pact where they reduce and we reduce nuclear, that would be a great thing for the world.

And I do believe -- I do believe that will happen. We've -- we have discussed it. I've also discussed it with China. I've discussed it with President Putin. I've also discussed it with China. And I will tell you, China was very, very excited about talking about it, and so is Russia. So I think we'll have a deal at some point.

Q When?

THE PRESIDENT: But the particular pact you're talking about that expired as of today, they weren't living up to their commitment. And I said, if they're not going to live up to their commitment, then we have to -- we always have to be in the lead.

You know, I've redone our nuclear. We have new nuclear coming. I hate to tell that to people. I hate to say it because it's devastating, but we've always got to be in the lead.

Hopefully -- and hope to God -- you never have to use it.

Q But you're now going to test the new cruise missiles? You're now going to test the new cruise missiles, correct?

THE PRESIDENT: Say it.

Q You're now going to test new cruise missiles that were previously banned under this agreement?

THE PRESIDENT: We have new everything.

Q Would that be provocative?

THE PRESIDENT: We have the -- we have the finest military in the world. We make the finest equipment in the world by far,

whether it's fighters, whether it's -- whether it's missiles, whether it's the ships, whether it's submarines. There's nobody to compete with us. But if we could hold off spending by getting a pact with Russia and with China, that would be very good for --

Q Do you believe that would be provocative?

THE PRESIDENT: -- that would be very good for all three countries.

Q On the trade deal that you signed today -- that was signed today between the U.S. and EU --

THE PRESIDENT: You're talking about the trade with the -- on beef?

Q Yeah, exactly. Can you now resolve, quickly, all of the trade disputes with the EU?

THE PRESIDENT: EU is very tough to deal with. They're -- you know, they're very difficult. They have barriers. They had barriers on beef. We broke that barrier today. I appreciate it. It's a group of countries, as you know. We love those countries, but, for dealing with them, they're very, very difficult.

But we did a very big deal today -- beef. And we're going to be selling them a big percentage of their beef. And that's great for our ranchers and farmers, so we were happy to do it.

Q Are auto tariffs off the table? Or do you still think it's (inaudible)?

THE PRESIDENT: Auto -- auto tariffs are never off the table. If they would not treat us fairly -- which they're not. I mean, you know, it's, right now --

Look, the EU has tremendous barriers to us, but we just broke the first barrier. And maybe we broke it because of the fact that if I don't get what we want, I'll put auto tariffs. Because it's all about the automobile, and it's all about the tariffs. If I don't get what I want, I'll have no choice but maybe to do that. But so far, they've been very good.

And I want to thank Mexico. The numbers are way, way down -- apprehensions. The numbers are way down. Mexico -- they have about 21,000. They actually now have maybe more than that on our border. They have another 6,000 on their northern border. Okay? If you view it that way -- their northern border, near Guatemala. And, I will tell you, Mexico is doing a great job.

Q Speaking, Mr. President, of the southern border, any progress on a permanent DHS Secretary?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I would love to see -- before we talk about Secretary, I will tell you, I would love to see the Democrats sit down and work out the loopholes in 20 minutes -- because that's what it would take -- and work out asylum. But we're moving along with an asylum fix and asylum bill. Lindsey Graham is heading it up very capably, and we'll see what happens.

Q Mr. President, do you anticipate that if the trade war with China continues that there will be further bailouts for farmers in the U.S.?

THE PRESIDENT: I'll always help our farmers. Our farmers were targeted by China. And our farmers -- frankly, these are great patriots. I'll always help our farmers.

There'll be a time when the biggest beneficiary of what I'm doing, with respect to China and trade, generally -- you're seeing it with the EU. They couldn't do the cattle thing at all -- beef. They couldn't do it at all. And now, all of a sudden, this came out of nowhere. Our farmers will ultimately be the biggest beneficiaries, and they know that. But our farmers are great patriots.

Q Mr. President, can you assure Americans they won't pay more for their Christmas presents this year due to new tariffs on Chinese products?

THE PRESIDENT: No, what happens is China devalues their currency and China also is pouring money out, and that will pay for the tariffs. It's a total misnomer.

Now, I don't say that with all countries, but with China, they're very highly sophisticated, but so are we -- more than anybody would understand. All you have to do is ask China. All you have to do is ask China.

But let me just explain. So, China is devaluing their currency and they're also pouring money in. Their currency is going to hell, but they're also pouring money in. And that will totally pay for the tariffs. The tariffs are not being paid for by our people; it's being paid for by China because of devaluation and because they're pumping money in.

Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

Q (Inaudible) I had talked with a farmer last night, a soy bean farmer. And he said tariffs are causing crisis after crisis for him, and this will kill him even more.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you interviewed the wrong farmer, number one.

Number two: Any amount that China sucks out, we're making up out of the billions of dollars that we're taking in.

Remember this: Our country is taking in billions and billions of dollars from China. We never took in ten cents from China. And out of that many billions of dollars, we're taking a part of it, and we're giving it to the farmers because they've been targeted by China. The farmers -- they come out totally whole. So you interviewed the wrong farmer, but that's all right.

END

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